



Boris Brindar, Church Restoration Group art conservator, colors in the stencils at the company's Cranberry Township office.

Crown Jewel

Firm restores historic buildings, artifacts

An unobtrusive pole building in Cranberry Township houses a business that protects, repairs and restores some of the most priceless objects on Earth.

Matt Beahm, facilities consultant at Church Restoration Group, said the company performs every task a church or historical building may need after a catastrophe such as a flood or fire.

Upon a call from an insurance company to report the damage, the company immediately sends out its remediation branch, ServiceMaster. Personnel do primary tasks such as removing water, tearing up or drying out carpet or cleaning up mold.

Then professionals from Church Restoration step in to assess the damage and determine the restoration that is needed before actually performing repairs.

Beahm said his compa-



This shows the Church Restoration Group's finished work at St. Charles Avenue Presbyterian Church in New Orleans. Other clients have included the Carnegie Museums in Pittsburgh and the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md.

ny has restored fine art, liturgical furniture, statues, flooring, ornamental plasterwork and artifacts in more than 400 buildings that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Thanks to the company's chief conservator, artisan Boris Brindar,

the Church Restoration Group is able to clean and recreate paintings, mosaics and stenciling or reassemble and repaint statues.

"If something is broken, Boris can put the pieces back together with virtually no indication it was damaged," Beahm



From left are Tony Attanucci, Church Restoration Group project manager; Paul Worthington, construction vice president; and Matt Beahm, facilities consultant.

said. "He uses cleaning materials, adhesives and conservator techniques that are consistent with industry standards."

Brindar's conservation lab has the feel of an artist's studio, as two- and three-dimensional examples of his work are displayed. He learned his craft from his father, an artisan for the St. Petersburg Museum in Russia, where the affable artist grew up.

Brindar said he creates a proposed design after assessing the damage in a building, then presents it to the owners or officials. If approved, he and a team of up to 30 artisans contracted by Church Restoration Group work toward that design.

He said many times additional art is discovered during the assessment portion of a job.

For example, Brindar recently removed a layer of paint from an archway in a church and uncovered intricate stenciling underneath. Brindar recreated the stencil pattern and used it to return the archway to its original beauty.

Beahm said Church Restoration sprouted from the Pittsburgh-area Mistick construction companies about 50 years ago. He said the company, which is owned by Tom Mistick, continues to expand its services in the niche market of sacred and historical restoration.

Beahm said Church Restoration has recently

added emergency preparedness to its list of services by creating easy-to-use software that allows church or historical building officials to conduct a risk assessment, identify potential hazards, remove those hazards and develop an action plan in case of emergency.

"We've excelled in assisting clients whose charge is to maintain these structures," Beahm said.

Because it is a Mistick company, Church Restoration Group provides any construction a building may need following a disaster. Beahm said unlike most restoration firms, his company focuses on allowing worship services or activities to continue during restoration.

Beahm said Church Restoration Group has completed a number of unique projects over the years, including:

- The recent case of a steeple crashing through the roof of a converted Pittsburgh church during a storm and landing on a woman's desk. The construction division is completing the roof repair, and the damaged copper steeple is being repaired by Brindar in the Marshall Road shop.

- Hundreds of churches, synagogues and historical buildings as a result of Hurricane Katrina.

- Carnegie Museums in Pittsburgh after the 30-inch snowfall in February. Several buildings suffered water damage from ice dams that formed on facility roofs, including ornamental plaster, murals

UP CLOSE

Church Restoration Group

ADDRESS: 9189 Marshall Road, Cranberry Township

OWNER: Thomas Mistick

EMPLOYEES: 25

BUSINESS: Restoring sacred and historic buildings

QUOTE: "Our projects encompass all we can do, from structural repair all the way up to restoration."

— Boris Brindar, chief conservator

and comics.

- St. Paul's Monastery on Pittsburgh's South Side, where the company reconfigured a side chapel and built a pine coffin for the remains of Father Foley, who is being considered for sainthood in the Catholic Church. Foley was recently reinterred there.

- The chapel at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md. Officials there wanted water damage repaired and the chapel taken back to its original design regarding paint, murals and artwork.

- The cleaning and refurbishing of all 14 Stations of the Cross murals at a church where Brindar found a solid wooden statue of the Virgin Mary that he estimated was two centuries old.

- The cleaning and refurbishment of a private liturgical art collection that included a piece of art carved from the tusk of a woolly mammoth and inscribed in Russian.

Beahm seems accustomed to the wide-eyed wonder with which people respond upon hearing the list of projects completed and under way at Church Restoration.

"We're the best little jewel in Cranberry," he said. ♦